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TAGS: [AORC](#) [ECON](#) [ENRG](#) [IAEA](#) [IZ](#) [PREL](#)
SUBJECT: TUWAITHA UPDATE: MEETING WITH MOST MINISTER

Classified By: ECONOMIC MINISTER CHARLES P. RIES FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (S), SUMMARY: Energy Attache and Embassy officer met with Ra'id Fahmi Jahid, Minister of Science and Technology regarding progress toward completing the corrected letter requesting USG assistance in the removal of approximately 550 tons of natural uranium (yellow cake) and four high-activity radioactive sources from the Tuwaitha Nuclear Research Complex (TNRC). The Minister was also asked about progress toward finding a purchaser for the yellow cake. The Minister stated that he was not aware of having seen a corrected letter for his signature within the last approximately two weeks, and while generally aware of the search for a purchaser, he noted that this effort was the responsibility of the Prime Minister's committee. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (S). On September 13, 2007, Energy Attache and Embassy officer met with Ra'id Fahmi Jahid, the Minister of Science and Technology, to discuss progress toward completing a corrected letter requesting USG assistance in removing approximately 550 tons of natural uranium and four high-activity radioactive sources from the Tuwaitha Nuclear Research Complex (TNRC). The Minister had signed such a letter on July 29, 2007, but the letter had, among other things, omitted an express reference to the four high-activity sources and misstated the assistance that the USG was willing to provide. Ambassador Srood Najib, chairman of the Prime Minister's Tuwaitha committee, stated a willingness to have a new letter prepared and signed by the Minister. Approximately two weeks ago, Emboffs provided Ambassador Srood Najib with language correcting these errors, and had understood from Najib that the language would be forwarded to the Minister to be incorporated into a new letter. Najib represented that he expected the corrected letter to be ready during the week of September 3. In addition, Najib stated to Embassy Baghdad emboff in New York on TDY, that he anticipated a meeting with the Minister on September 11, to discuss the letter. Numerous attempts by Emboffs to contact Najib had been unsuccessful until receiving a e-mail message from him on September 14.

¶3. (S). When asked about the letter, the Minister at first denied knowing anything about a second letter and then stated that he was not aware of having seen any such letter within the last approximately two weeks. He also indicated that he had not recently met with or spoken to Najib. According to the e-mail received by Energy Attache from Najib, the press of business had prevented him from providing the letter to the Minister for signature. The message stated that Najib

would be seeing the Minister "this coming week in NY" and have the letter signed.

¶4. (S). Emboffs displayed Operation McCall briefing slides to the Minister. He was particularly interested in the improvements to the Site C area necessary for the yellow cake repackaging effort. The Minister also asked about the role of local site security in the operation. We informed him that the USG would be providing its own security for the repackaging and transportation effort. He then asked only that we coordinate with the local security contingent. The Minister was very appreciative of the information.

¶5. (S). Emboffs asked the Minister if he was aware of the progress in finding a purchaser for the yellow cake. He stated that this effort was being pursued by the Prime Minister's committee and understood that meetings were being held in Paris. He noted that Dr. al-Atia and Mr. al-Share' had not yet returned from Paris. (Comment: It appeared that the Minister is not involving himself in the effort to find a purchaser for the yellow cake, observing that this effort was the responsibility of the Prime Minister's committee. End Comment.) We reiterated that, as the Minister could see from the McCall slide display, activities were proceeding and that it was essential that a destination for the material be identified quickly in order to meet the objectives of the removal effort. (Note: The e-mail message from Najib, apparently speaking of himself and the Minister, stated, "(W)e both understand that, we don't have more time to waist (sic). . . End Note.)

¶6. (S). Emboffs then explained that if a purchaser were not found in a timely manner, the yellow cake could be sent to a

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conversion facility, converted to UF6 and stored for an appropriate time until a purchaser was found. He asked where conversion facilities were located, and we discussed the potential advantages, security and more marketable material, among other and disadvantages, up-front cost for conversion services (which could be passed along to the purchaser). (Note: We provided a short primer on the front end of the nuclear fuel cycle to inform the Minister's understanding that, in order to be used in a nuclear reactor, the yellow cake would have to proceed through the conversion process. End Note.) The Minister also observed that the storage of the converted material would allow time for the natural uranium market to improve.

¶7. (S). The Minister stated that he would leave on September 16 to attend meetings in Vienna during the week of September 17 with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and from there, travel with the Prime Minister to New York. The Minister understood that the Secretary of Energy would be attending the IAEA meetings and appeared to look forward to seeing him. The Minister also noted that he was no longer the Acting Minister of Planning, as Ali Baban had returned as the Minister of Planning.

¶8. (S). Note: The September 14, e-mail message from Amb. Najib contained additional statements indicating that the "meetings went well in Paris and taking place in Vienna this week, the respond (sic) from certain countries came back positive." One other statement in the e-mail message is, however, troubling, "(D)elay in finalizing this CASE arise (sic) from the corruption in the Ministry itself. . ." There is no further explanation and this statement will require face-to-face follow-up. End Note.
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